

THE PRIME CENTER

Pain Research, Informatics, Medical comorbidities, and Education Center

West Haven

Research Enhancement Award Program

Director: Robert D. Kerns, PhD,

Executive Summary for Fiscal Year 2011

The West Haven REAP, otherwise called the Pain Research, Informatics, Medical Comorbidities and Education (PRIME) Center is based at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System (VACHS) in VISN 1. The Center's primary academic affiliate is Yale University School of Medicine. The PRIME Center's mission, under the direction of Robert Kerns, PhD, is to study the complex interactions between pain and associated chronic disease and behavioral health factors to develop and implement effective interventions that can reduce pain and suffering by employing principles of medical informatics, health services research, and behavioral science. A key objective is to enhance local and national capacities for a broad research and education agenda that focuses on pain and pain management and provide explicit support for the VHA National Pain Management Strategy. Specific areas of health services research include: (1) studying how best to promote access, continuity, and sustainability of safe and effective interventions for pain and pain-related disability across the spectrum of acute, chronic non-cancer, and cancer related pain, pain in the context of palliative care, and prevention of development of chronic pain; (2) exploring how to increase respect for patient risks, preferences, and priorities; (3) reducing ethnic/racial, geographic, gender related, and age-related disparities in access and delivery of effective pain care; and (4) examining how to promote organizational change that can increase health related quality of life and reduce symptom burden for Veterans with pain and comorbid chronic disease.

The PRIME Center received initial funding in FY2009, and much of the ensuing three years has been working to ensure the Center's eligibility as a REAP and building the Center's infrastructure and operations. This year we have focused intensely on developing an innovative and scientifically rigorous collection of projects to enhance chronic pain management in the patient aligned care team (PACT) setting for the newly announced HSR&D CREATE funding mechanism. The Center currently supports 11 Core, 10 Affiliate and 18 Associate investigators, and 8 eligible studies including three funded IIR's, four pilot projects, and one QuERI RRP. This FY, Center investigators were PIs or site PIs in 24 funded studies, published 28 articles in peer reviewed journals, and submitted 5 IIR, 1 CDA, and 2 pilot applications. In FY2011, the Center had total funding of \$2.8 million and VA funding of \$2.1 million. In order to continue to broaden our funded research portfolio we have focused on building our community of health services researchers and broadening the scope of pain-relevant research, in particular. A weekly PRIME Center educational seminar provides investigators an opportunity to present ideas for new projects and solicit feedback from the larger scientific community. As a strategy to support junior faculty and new projects, we funded four Locally Initiated Projects (LIPs) in FY2011. The Center is proud of its several key impacts, especially Dr. Kerns' membership on the Institute of Medicine committee which produced the recently published report on pain research, education and treatment in the US.